

Testimony Regarding the Governor's Budget Recommendation (HB Bill 5044) on  
Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging  
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
February 19, 2016  
Submitted by Christine Schilke, Middletown Resident

Thank you for accepting this testimony on Governor's House Bill 5044, *An Act Making Adjustment to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017*. My name is Christine Schilke. I am a Middletown resident with a decade of combined professional experience in affordable housing and downtown revitalization. I also volunteer at Middlesex Hospital and with Young Energetic Solutions (YES), an organization that seeks to empower young people to create a more vibrant Connecticut. It is from this personal and professional experience that I draw my support for the Legislative Commission on Aging.

Having witnessed the thoughtful, tireless advocacy of Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging, I appreciate their lifespan lens on wide-ranging issues and its potential impact on all of the state's residents – young and old. Indeed, the two largest segments of Connecticut's population are Millennials and Baby Boomers. As it happens, a recent national study of the American Planning Association and other research shows an exciting convergence of preference between these groups—both demographic segments are looking to become less car-dependent and want to live in vibrant, mixed use, walkable, diverse neighborhoods. Accordingly, the leadership that the Commission on Aging provides in helping older adults age in place and in the community benefits everyone—from older adults to young professionals to persons with disabilities to young families.

Working in the fields of affordable housing and downtown revitalization, I've observed that it's important to consider whether you should invest in development for the population you have, or the one you seek. That's why expanding opportunities for older adults in Connecticut is so vitally important, especially as the aging population continues to grow significantly. According to the Commission on Aging, by 2025, at least 20% of almost every town's residents will be age 65 or older, with the percentage exceeding 40% in some towns. The needs of this burgeoning population must be addressed. The flip side of this issue though – and certainly of equal importance – are the needs of the myriad young professionals who will be required to support older adults and persons with disabilities. The Commission artfully understands and espouses the need for our communities to be designed and maintained to sustain both of these important demographics (as well as those in between) by creating economically vibrant, diverse communities that enhance opportunities for connection between generations.

I applaud the Commission on Aging for objectively assessing policy with a functional needs frame, rather than an age-restricted frame. For example, their work with DataHaven on the largest-ever survey on neighborhood-level quality of life, health and happiness (prepared in conjunction with the World Health Organization), as well as their partnership with the Capitol Region Council of Governments to determine the livability preferences of Millennials and

Boomers not only provide a wealth of information on the livability preferences of these groups, they also help give guidance to municipal and state leaders on how to create dynamic, accessible, amenity-rich communities that all of Connecticut's residents can benefit from. In addition, their perspective is always grounded in data and best practices – which they happily share with their extensive, diverse partner network, ensuring that other related organizations are better positioned to support and enhance the Commission's work in addition to their own – in essence acting as a non-partisan, data-driven rising tide that lifts all boats who seek to improve the lives of Connecticut residents.

I therefore urge you to please continue your support of the Commission on Aging's efforts to shape great Connecticut communities for people to grow up and grow older.